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MARCUS S. ZIMMERMAN;

OR THE

Moral and Religious Training

OF

CHILDREN,

BY

REV. A. J. HUNTINGTON,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, AUGUSTA, GA.

MACON, GA:
GEORGIA BAPTIST BIBLE AND COL. SOCIETY, F. M. HAYGOOD, AGENT.
1863.

NOTE.—The obituary notice with which this tract is introduced, appeared, about two years ago, in the *Christian Index*. Not long after it was published, it was suggested to the writer, by a very distinguished clergymen of the State, to prepare a tract, containing the substance of that obituary, together with such remarks as might seem appropriate, upon the religious education of the young. Various causes, however, have delayed the preparation of the following pages.

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MARCUS S. ZIMMERMAN;

OR THE

Moral and Religious Training

OF CHILDREN.

Died, at the residence of his father, in Augusta, on the 29th of November, 1860, at the age of four years, Marcus S. Zimmerman, son of Mr. R. P. and Mrs. Bettie M. Zimmerman, and grandson of the late Rev. Thomas Meredith, of Raleigh, N. C. He was a boy of uncommon sprightliness and of very attractive qualities. He was blessed with christian parents, who endeavored, at home, to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and who, as soon as he was old enough to receive religious instruction, also guided his little feet to the Sunday School. Nor were their efforts for his spiritual welfare in vain; for he showed, in the closing scenes of his life, that the truths of the gospel had made an impression upon his infant soul. Some days before his death, and while he was but slightly unwell,

P42665

he said, as he awoke in the morning, "I want to die and go to heaven." As his disease increased in severity, he bore his intense sufferings without fretfulness or murmuring. A few hours previous to his death, he called his mother to him, and gave her a farewell kiss; then looked anxiously around the room, as if in search of some one else, and, upon being asked whom he wanted, replied, "Papa." His father was then called in from an adjoining room, and the little sufferer, with a kiss, bade him adieu. In like manner he took leave of his grandmother, and other members of the family and friends who stood around his dying bed, and of some of the servants of the household for whom he had sent. Then, while in view of such a scene, all that were gathered around him were in tears, but while a sweet serenity marked the countenance of the dying child, his weeping father said to him, "Son, where are you going?" His instant reply, with the calm and trustful look of the christian, was, "To Jesus." A few minutes after this he exclaimed, "Papa, I'm there!" "Where, son?" "To Jesus," was the answer. Presently he said, "Mamma, I see Jesus." Then he requested his father to pray that the doctors might make him well. His father replied that he had done so, but that Christ wanted him with him, and that he must

ask him to take his little spirit to heaven. He calmly responded, "I can get on my knees now and ask him to take my little spirit to heaven," and thereupon he attempted to rise up, but his mother dissuaded him, telling him he could pray as he lay in bed. Turning quickly to her he said, "Mamma, tell me the words to say." She pronounced for him the words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" but her voice was stifled so that she could proceed no further; but the child repeated these words after her, and then, of his own accord, added, "To reign with God in light forever and ever. Amen." This prayer, so far as is known, no one had ever taught him. But a few minutes after this he expired.

How bitter a thing it must have been for those fond parents to carry away, from the home of which he had been the music and the joy, and to cover up in the dark grave, a child of such loveliness and such promise! But how full of consolation to them was the thought, that Jesus had, in infinite kindness, taken him to the heavenly mansions, where he will have no more temptation, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.

"He died to sin; he died to care;
But for a moment felt the rod;
Then, rising on the viewless air,
Spread his light wings, and soared to God."

P42665

Now there is a lesson of grand importance which the life and death of little Marcus Zimmerman should impress upon our minds.—Though he was but four years of age, the remarkable words he uttered in the closing scenes of his life, afford us grounds for believing that he had a sufficient apprehension of the character of Christ to accept him, and lean upon him, as his Saviour. In view, then, of the evidence which he and other children of like age have given of faith in the Redeemer, is it not an obvious duty, and have we not the most cheering encouragement, to labor diligently for the religious instruction of our offspring, and to seek to guide them, even at this early period, to the fold of the Great Shepherd?

Now, the moral training of children and youth is a subject, which, though viewed merely with reference to the present life, ought to engage the serious attention of all good and considerate men, and, especially, of discerning patriots and philanthropists; for children soon take the places of their parents, assuming the control of society and the government of states. And they generally carry with them into all the subsequent periods of life the sentiments, and principles, and habits, which they adopt in their early years. From the character, then, which the children and youth of a country, and

especially of a republican country, bear, we may almost, with certainty, determine what its future fortunes will be. And the efforts we are now making, at an expense of so much treasure and blood, to acquire our national independence, will be of but little avail, if we permit those who are growing up under our care, and who will soon wield our country's destinies, now to form habits of disobedience to parents, of idleness, insincerity, pride and revenge,—habits which will soon yield the bitter fruits of insubordination to civil authority, intemperance, licentiousness, dishonesty, demagogism, bloody riots, intestine strifes, revolution and anarchy.

But if the moral education of our children is a matter of so great moment, even in reference to this world, how much more important does it appear, when we consider that they are endowed with an immortal nature, and are soon to enter upon another state of being, in which their condition and happiness are to depend upon the characters they now develop. Not only their temporal, but their eternal destinies are committed to our care.

Most seriously, then, and solemnly should parents ponder the nature of this great trust. They feel that, in no small degree, it is for their offspring they desire to live. But surely it is to the welfare of our children, not merely for

the few years of time, but especially for the countless centuries of eternity, that we should have respect. So far, then, as our attention to them is concerned, we should regard their religious training as the great object of our lives —the one, in comparison with which every other interest of theirs sinks into insignificance. The wealth we labor to acquire for them will do them but little good. Death will deprive them of the estates they inherit, almost as soon as they possess them. But it is of unspeakable importance to secure for them treasures in heaven, which they may enjoy forever. And yet how many hours fathers and mothers are accustomed daily to spend, in order to lay up earthly goods for their children, while they give scarcley a thought to their everlasting concerns.

So, too, the cultivation of the intellects of our children, is far less important, than the training of their moral and religious faculties. For their mental development, though it enlarges their means of usefulness and enjoyment, increases nevertheless, their power of mischief and their capacity of suffering. Nor can the highest intellectual culture qualify them for the purity of heaven. But though the religious education of children is so much more important than their intellectual improvement, yet schools for mental discipline are established all

over the land, and parents require their children to spend hours in them, each day, in patient study; while in most families that are even styled christian, scarcely the slightest pains are systematically bestowed upon the moral training of the young.

Nor will it be of much avail to our children, if we should procure for them earthly honors, or even fame, for the few years of life; but it will be of infinite value to them to gain the smiles of God, and the approbation of all the good for the everlasting ages. And yet how solicitous parents are to acquire for their sons and daughters influence and distinction in society; but how little effort they put forth to secure for them the praise of their final Judge!

No, parents, even those who profess to be christians, do not generally make it one of their chief concerns to prepare their children for the service of God on earth, and for his presence in heaven. They seem more anxious that their children should be great, than that they should be good; that they should be supplied with comforts in this world, than that they should be happy in eternity; that they should make a fine display in human society for a day, than that they should shine as stars in the kingdom of God forever. But, like Hannah, we ought to feel that we have received our children from

the Lord, and to determine to lend them to him, and to bring them up as he requires.

In view, then, of the momentous consequences which depend on the moral and religious training of the young, we should enter on this part of their education as soon as they are capable of receiving it, and continue it as long as they are under our influence. Just as soon as they are old enough to entertain right and wrong notions, just so soon we should begin to foster in them what is good, and root out what is evil. Just as soon as they can comprehend our meaning, we should teach them to cherish benevolence, and love, and compassion, and forgiveness; and to overcome all malice, and selfishness, and envy, and revenge. We should encourage them to practice justice, and kindness, and forbearance; and always to abstain from wrong and cruelty, and impatience. We should show them the loveliness and excellence of truth and ingenuousness; and the hatefulness and meanness of falsehood and insincerity. We should urge them to cultivate purity of thought and modesty of behaviour; and to avoid all indelicacy and vulgarity. And we should incite them to be firm and bold in resisting what is evil, and in adhering to what is good. In a word, we should endeavor to make our children in principle and character now

what we wish them to be in after life. We should not be content with their retaining for a day a single fault which we are unwilling they should carry into mature age; for the longer it remains, the harder to eradicate does it become. If we cannot cure their moral defects while their minds are yet tender and pliable, how can we hope to overcome their evil propensities when they shall have been strengthened by increasing age, and shall have acquired the force of fixed habits? And we may here remark that we should not, as so many thoughtless parents do, tolerate, and even encourage real faults in children, because these faults may amuse us, and may give them an appearance of smartness in their early years; for that which may seem to us innocent and diverting in their childhood, may, by constant indulgence, become, in later life, a serious blemish, or even a great vice, subjecting both them and us to sorrow and shame.

But, in order to correct the faults of children, we should present to them the proper motives for the cultivation of virtue, rather than appeal to their fear of bodily suffering; and yet, as punishment must sometimes be inflicted on persons of mature age, in order to restrain them from wrong-doing, so, if "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, the rod of correction"

must now and then be used, to "drive it from him." But, if we must resort to this remedy, we should apply it, not in anger, but in love. But let the faults of children be cured, cured by mild means, if possible; if not, by those of a sterner character. Who would not regard it as cruel to suffer a child to grow up with some bodily defect or disease, which might, with proper care, be removed? How much more unkind it really is to permit his evil disposition to remain unsubdued, which, if not restrained, will bring misery upon himself, as well as others, both here and forever.

But we should also enter upon the more strictly religious education of our children just as soon as they can comprehend the truths we wish to impress. And they become capable of receiving this kind of instruction at a much earlier period than we generally suppose. Hundreds of instances of the conversion of children at the age of five or six years have been put on record, in order to stimulate us to strive for the spiritual improvement of our offspring from their infancy. As soon as they are capable of forming an idea of God, their creator and preserver, so soon should they be made acquainted with his character, and taught to reverence and serve him. As soon as they are old enough to understand what any of his commands are,

so soon should they be taught to obey them. As soon as they can entertain sentiments of regard and veneration for great and noble characters, like Washington and Howard, so soon should they be taught to admire and love the blessed Saviour. And as soon as they have learned what it is to confide in parents and friends, so soon should they be taught to entrust their souls to Jesus for salvation. And yet parents seem to suppose that it is necessary for their children to pass through years of temptation and peril, if not of actual vice, and to form, and for a long time to practice, the habit of rebelling against God, and of rejecting Christ before they can begin to hate sin, and to love and serve the Saviour. Will this habit of sin be more easily overcome after it has gained strength by a long period of indulgence? Is it a less difficult thing to influence the mind of the youth or the man, than of the child? Can the full grown oak be more readily bent than the slender twig? Why, then, should we suffer those early years during which our children, with the promised aid of the spirit, may be moulded under our plastic touch, almost like clay in the hands of the potter—those early years during which they listen so eagerly and inquisitively to the truths of the Bible, and, especially, to the story of redemption, to pass

away without the most strenuous and persistent efforts to fix permanent religious impressions on their souls? Why should we wait until their attention is absorbed in the amusements and follies of youth, and evil principles have taken deep root? Why should we allow Satan, that wide-awake educator of the young, to anticipate us in the work of training them, and by all the influences he can exert, to entice them on for years in the road to hell, before we seriously and perseveringly attempt to turn their feet into the way to heaven? Why should we permit them so long to run the awful risk of losing their souls, before we begin, in earnest, to try to save them?

But if the moral and religious training of children be thus important, it becomes us to consider, more particularly, how this department of their education may be successfully conducted.

1. Our first remark, then, is, that *we should cultivate the conscience* of children, or that faculty the Creator has given them by which they judge of right and wrong, and by which they approve the one and condemn the other. This, like every other power of the soul, may be either strengthened by use, or weakened by neglect. We should seek to develop it in children by aiding them in gaining clear moral perceptions.

We should teach them to distinguish carefully between what is right in itself—what is pleasing to God—and what may happen to be for their temporal interests. We should assist them in judging of the right and the wrong by furnishing them with constant and familiar illustrations of the one and the other, drawn from their own conduct, or that of their associates, or from those acts of men of which they hear or read.

And in order that the right and the wrong may appear to them widely separated from each other, and that they may be quick to distinguish between them, we should labor to show them the excellence of the former, and the hatefulness of the latter. Especially, since every violation of conscience renders it less tender and sensitive, and since, by a long disregard of its admonitions, it at length almost ceases to speak, we should teach our children ever to obey even its feeblest voice.

Now, who can estimate the mighty influence which a cultivated conscience will continually exert over them, in behalf of virtue and true religion?

2. And, in passing, we may say, that *we should teach our children religious truth even from the book of nature.* In the wonders of the universe we should bid them behold the perfections of the Deity. In making them acquainted

with the facts of science, we should make them acquainted with natural theology. We should show them how strikingly the heavens declare the glory of God; and weshould explain to them how his unlimited skill and kindness are manifested in the combinations and proportions of the elements that compose the very air they breathe, the water they drink, and the soil from which they derive their subsistence; and how his infinite wisdom and benevolence are exhibited in their own bodily structure, in those various organizations of beasts and birds, and fishes, and reptiles, and insects, which fit them for the various spheres in which they are designed to move; in short, in all that provision which has been made for the happiness of living creatures. By unfolding this volume of nature to their inquisitive minds, and by pointing them, on its pages, to full proofs of God's existence, and to rich illustrations of his power, and wisdom, and love, we may not only guard them against skepticism in after life, but incite them to admire, adore and serve the great creator. Let them not shut their eyes upon the beauties and glories of the universe, nor in gazing upon them, let them fail to discover the handiwork of their Heavenly Father.

3. But far more carefully *should we instruct our children in the truths of the Bible.* This book

is adapted, by its wonderful revelations, to produce a deep and lasting impression on their minds. It teaches them that they are under the government of a holy God, who commands them to be holy like himself, who hates all the workers of iniquity, and who is satisfied with no outward observance of his laws, but requires the affections of the heart. It teaches them that this holy God is omniscient; that the acts they commit under the cover of midnight darkness are as distinctly seen by him, as those which are done under the blaze of the noonday sun; and that even the feelings and purposes which lurk in the innermost chambers of the soul are all open to his constant gaze. It teaches them that they are immortal, and that they are to render an account at the judgment-seat of this pure and all-seeing One; that, if their actions, in the present life, are in accordance with his requirements, they will, hereafter, be rewarded with eternal and unspeakable happiness; but that, if their conduct is now in opposition to his will, they will be driven away into the fires that never shall be quenched. Now, are not great truths like these calculated, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to arouse the attention of children, and to deter them from sin?

But the doctrines of the Bible are also adap-

ted to touch their hearts, and to cause streams of love and thankfulness to their maker to gush forth. For this volume reveals to them God, not only as their infinitely kind Father, but also as their Redeemer, so full of compassion for men that he came down to their sinful abodes in human form, and endured reproach and torture, and even death itself, in order to forgive and save all who believe in him and obey him; and so kind, and gentle, and condescending, that he invited even little children to his arms.

The Bible also stimulates the child to the cultivation of virtue and piety by its holy precepts; by its approbation of the good; by its condemnation of the wicked; by its illustrations of human excellence; and, most of all, by holding up to him the perfect example of Christ for his imitation.

Can we wonder, then, that the Psalmist should have declared that the young man was to cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to God's word?

Now, when we consider how powerful the tendency of the Bible is, to purify the hearts and actions of children, can we hesitate to labor to fix its truths so deeply in their tender minds, that the impressions shall be indelible, and become, as it were, a part of their moral nature? Besides urging his children to read this book

in a systematic manner for themselves, every father, in order to show them the importance he attaches to the exercise, and in order to impart to it the greatest dignity and benefit, should at least, morning and evening, assemble them around him, and read to them from the Sacred Word; neglecting, indeed, no part of the volume, but recurring more frequently to those portions which are best fitted to awaken and fix their attention, and to mould their hearts and characters. But if children have been deprived of their father, the mother should not hesitate to fill his place in the performance of this service. And surely our affection for our offspring, as well as our duty to our master, requires us habitually and carefully, to unfold to them, in the formative period of their existence, the contents of that book of which God is the author, and which he has given them for their direction in this world, and for their guidance to the heavenly mansions. Would parents send forth a son on a journey through a vast and dense wilderness, in which there were many by-paths that might turn him from the track he wished to pursue,—would they permit him to enter on so perilous a way, without giving him the best possible directions for his course? Or, if he were about to make a voyage to a distant land, would they consent to his launching forth with

neither compass nor chart by which to steer his vessel over the waste of waters? Let us, then, if we desire that our sons and daughters should avoid the ten thousand ways of sin and ruin, that they should travel in the straight and narrow way of virtue and true religion, and reach heaven at the end of their course, give them daily instruction in the Holy Scriptures.

And let parents, even those who train their children carefully themselves, also send them to the Sabbath School, where they may receive the additional instructions, admonitions, and exhortations of faithful and affectionate teachers, and, especially, that their presence may attract other children who are favored with no religious education at home. But if parents would show the great importance they attach to the exercises of the Sabbath School, and would secure the cheerful attendance of their children, they should, except in extraordinary cases, punctually attend themselves,—as teachers, if their services are needed, if not, at least as friends and patrons of so noble an institution. And let christian men and women, who have no children of their own to train up, be also entreated to come to the Sabbath School, and engage in the great work, an angel would rejoice to perform, of preparing the young to become useful and happy members of society, and to serve God eternally in his upper temple.

And as soon as our children are old enough to behave with propriety in a public assembly, we should also bring them, on the Lord's day, under the influence of the other exercises of the sanctuary. There they should be seated at our side, where they may be under our immediate inspection, and should be taught to attend with solemnity to the services of the consecrated place. Least of all, should they, on this holy day, be released from parental restraint, and permitted to spend its sacred hours in roaming through the fields, or sauntering about the streets. If we suffer them to violate the Sabbath in childhood, we may expect them to practice the impious and soul-destroying habit of desecrating it in after life.

4. We should also *pray with and for them.* No parent who has any just conceptions of the vast responsibilities resting upon him,—of the momentous interests for time and eternity committed to his care, can avoid deeply feeling his need of wisdom and grace from above, to enable him so to manage his household that their highest temporal and everlasting welfare may be secured.

But not only parents, but children, too, need the divine blessing. While their judgment, and their power of resisting temptation, are weak; while the devil, their own evil inclinations, and

the fascinations of the world, are keeping them from the way of salvation, and urging them on to perdition; while their season of probation must soon come to an end; while they are thus hovering between the world of glory above and of woe beneath, do they not need our fervent prayer that God would at once change their sinful hearts and fit them for heaven? Can we bear the thought that they may be forever lost? that they may lift up those voices, now so dear to us, in the fruitless wail of despair? that they may be eternally separated from us as far as heaven is from hell? How can we consent to their going forth from us for a single morning, to be exposed to the fiercest temptations, without committing them to the care of him who is omnipotent to defend them from evil? On that very day on which we neglect to implore for them the divine blessing, they may fall, and their ruin for time and eternity be sealed!

But it is not enough to pray for them daily, as we certainly ought to do, in private. Is it not most suitable, also, that in the very midst of the families where this want of divine direction is felt, parents should acknowledge their dependence, and call on God for help? that where the blessing is desired, there the altar should be raised, and the sacrifice offered?

Besides, the truths expressed in family prayer

are calculated to produce salutary impressions on the minds of children. By our supplications they are reminded of the attributes of God; of their own sinfulness; of the atonement of Christ; and of the awards of eternity; and, hence, of their obligations to humble themselves before the Most High, and to revere, and adore, and thank, and love him; to repent of their transgressions; to trust in Jesus for salvation; and to strive for everlasting life. But if our devotions are all performed in secret, we fail to exert upon our household this mighty influence which the sentiments breathed in parental prayer are adapted to produce.

Then, too, the solicitude for their spiritual welfare which children perceive in our family petitions, is calculated to arouse them from their insensibility, and to direct their attention to religious concerns. But who can calculate the pernicious effects upon their impressible minds of the neglect of this exercise? We cannot well convince them that we regard them as exposed to imminent peril, and that we are intensely anxious for their salvation, if we do not pray with them and for them. By our neglect they are encouraged to banish from their minds all thoughts of spiritual things, and to become confirmed in those habits of ungodliness which may, at length, result even in a denial of the divine existence.

5. We should also seek to stimulate our offspring to the cultivation of virtue and holiness *by our example.* They regard their parents as their guides, and are close imitators of their acts. Who, then, can estimate the injury we inflict on them by bad example? If we, with more of knowledge of our duty, and with greater power of resisting temptation, than they possess,—if we are addicted to intemperance, or profanity, or deceit, or any other vice, how can we expect them to be virtuous? If we neglect God, and the Bible, and prayer; if we violate the Sabbath; if we turn our feet from the sanctuary, how can we expect them to practice the duties of religion? If we are selfish, or cruel, or malicious, or revengeful, how can we expect them to be controlled by the spirit of the gospel?

What can be more painful and humiliating to sensitive parents, than to feel that their children who look to them for direction, are misled by them, and encouraged to sin against God, and to go on in the broad road to hell!

If the example we place before them is of an irreligious tendency, our other teachings are of litttle value. Nay, if our practice is inconsistent and wrong, and we suspect that they perceive it is so, we shall feel ashamed and disinclined to give them precepts to which we do

not ourselves conform. But, even if by our words we do point out to them the way in which they should go, while we do not walk in it ourselves, all our admonitions will make no impression on their minds. "Actions speak louder than words." If we give them moral and religious prescriptions, which we do not use in our own case, they will surely say to us, "Physician, heal thyself."

We should seek, then, to be patterns to our children, not only of justice, and kindness, and truthfulness, and modesty, and sobriety—in a word, not only of the virtues embraced in a strict morality, but also of devotion to Jesus; of submission to his will; of humility and meekness, and gentleness, and forbearance, and forgiveness: in short, of the various graces that adorn the real christian.

6. We should also take care *to guard the young against whatever is corrupt in society.* It is true, that in the process of their education, they are, of necessity, liable to come in contact with moral evil. But this exposure of them, which we cannot well avoid, is all that is needful for the trial and development of their virtue, and all that they can safely endure, while their judgment, and their ability to withstand temptation, are yet so feeble. As long, then, as they remain under our care, we should see that

they are not absent at unsuitable hours from home; and, as far as lies within a proper exercise of parental authority, we should keep them from all vicious company; from loitering in the streets, and around places of public resort; from all scenes of special temptation; and, in short, from every influence which may seem more likely to corrupt than to improve their principles and their morals. We should remember that we are the guardians whom God has appointed over them, and that we are responsible for their conduct. Let us bear in mind, that, if they make themselves vile, and we restrain them not, he will chastise us, as he did Eli of old, for our neglect.

In view, then, of the important bearing which the moral training of our children has upon their and our temporal happiness, and upon the welfare of our country; but, most of all, in view of the preciousness of their deathless souls, whose salvation, so far as human agency is concerned, depends, in a great measure, upon the religious culture they receive from us; in view of the bliss for which, through God's blessing, we may prepare them, and of the woe into which, by our neglect, they may sink; let us awake, and apply ourselves to the work to which our master has appointed us. O ye who neglect the religious instruction of your chil-

dren, ye careless ones in Zion, are you the lovers of Jesus, and yet do you feel so little anxiety that your children should love him too? Are you journeying towards heaven, and still do you seem not to care that your children are tending downwards to hell? How will you be able to enjoy an undisturbed repose in Paradise, if, as you look through its ever-blooming fields, you shall not find your children there, but shall feel that, through your shameful and sinful neglect, their voices are heard amid the everlasting wail of the lost? What, then, we do, let us do quickly; for lo! with us the day is far spent, and the night is coming on.

BEYOND THE GARDEN-GATE.

"Children," said Mrs. Jay, "you may play anywhere in the yard, but don't go beyond the garden-gate. Do you hear me, Peter" "Yes, mother," said Peter, looking up from his wheelbarrow: "'Do not go beyond the garden-gate!'" Mother then, seeing her little boy and girl quietly at play in the yard, put on her bonnet and shawl, and went down street.

Peter and Jessie, his little sister, had nice plays together. He used to make believe horse, and draw her on his trucks, or she make believe a pumpkin, and be carried in his wheelbarrow; or they would both make believe cows, and set up a terrible mooing; indeed, there was no end to the different characters they took, all the while keeping very kind to each other. Their plays this afternoon led them down to the bottom of the garden, where there was a gate, hasped inside, which opened into a field of thick underbrush and trees, sloping down to a lower part of the village. This was the forbidden gate.

"I wish we could go out into the woods," said Peter; "perhaps we should find a bird's-nest." Peter unhasped the gate, and he and Jessie looked round and saw the pretty woods. "But *what did mother tell us?*" asked Jessie. "Perhaps she was afraid of bears," answered

Peter, "or the water in these woods, or something; but there are no bears. Oh, there's a squirrel in that tree! See him, see him, Jessie;" and away ran Peter to the woods, and away ran Jessie after him. The squirrel hid, and the children went on, hoping to find another. They strayed down a bank, and came to a brook and little pond. "Mother thought we'd fall into this pond, and that's the reason she cautioned us against coming here," said Peter; "but we shan't, shall we, Jessie?" "No," answered Jessie, "we wont." And so they ran round, and tumbled about, and picked flowers, and at last got back to the garden-gate safe and unharmed, without anybody knowing they went. "Jessie," said Peter, "*don't you tell.*" Not if mother asks?" asked Jessie. "She wont ask," said Peter.

Mother did not ask, nor did Jessie tell, and all went on at home as usual. Saturday night, after the children were washed, and Jessie had gone to sleep, Peter and his mother talked a little longer together, as they often did Saturday night. Peter said, "Mother, I have been in the woods beyond the garden-gate this week." "When did you go?" she asked. He told her. "And mother" he said, "nothing happened to us there; we didn't fall into the water, or get wet, or tear our clothes; no bears ate us up. Why didn't you want us to go?"

"You *lost* something that afternoon in the woods," said his mother. "Lost something!" said Peter; and he thought of his knife, and his slate pencils, and his ball, and a three-cent piece in his pocket; he hadn't lost one of them, he was quite sure. "Yes," repeated his mother, "think a moment what you have missed, for I know you lost something." Peter for a moment thought his mother must be a spirit; for how could *she* know when he didn't know himself? "You will recollect if you think," said she. Peter put his head under the bed-quilt, for he began to see he *had* lost something; and the more he thought, the more sure he was of it. "Mother," he at last said, in a little sorrowful voice, "I *did* lose something in those woods, I did. I lost the *happy* out of my heart." Ah, that was it; and a sad loss it is when a child loses the happy out of his heart.

It does not always concern a child to know *why* his parents forbid him this or that; *his* duty is obedience. Nor because nothing befalls him in a course of disobedience, must he conclude no harm is done at all. Peter and Jessie got home safely; but was there no harm done? Yes, yes; the happy left their little hearts. They were *afraid*—afraid their mother would find it out. This is the way doing wrong wrongs you. It wrongs you out of that peace

and comfort which God made you to enjoy; and all Peter's play in the woods did not make up for this loss, until he told his mother, and received her forgiveness with her good-night kiss.

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4 - 66